

- 122 direct road, two wagon-loads full of expedition equipment to Hsining fu which was to be my next goal. I myself took along on my circuitous bypaths the entire travel money for the coming years, which consisted of two small mule packs of silver bars. No one had been willing to give me the necessary guarantee for direct transport, and so I could not risk sending this silver along with the other equipment. I could perhaps have bought a few checks on companies in Hsining fu, but in that case I would surely have been given much "poorer" silver. It is not easy to find good, pure silver in the smaller cities, especially in the western part of the kingdom. Besides, one incurs the danger of being very badly cheated. Thus, I had cashed a great many of my checks in Lanchow fu. These /157/ inland checks are small Chinese documents resembling letters, without any European marks on them. They are payable to a certain weight of silver with a certain number of ounces and are made out to any name you wish. Mine were addressed to "the banking firm at the sign of the lucky shot" in Lanchow fu and made out by their agents in Shanghai to a Mr. Li whom I did not know. The German director of the Hankow branch of the German-Asiatic Bank once told me that on the basis of enquiries he had made of his comprador (1) he had discovered that this firm was operating
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1. Comprador is a Spanish word and belongs in the vocabulary of pidgin-English. A comprador is a trustworthy Chinese of experience who is absolutely necessary to every foreign business firm. He vouches for the solvency of the Chinese firms and controls the accuracy of the Chinese checks and currency, for there are only a few foreigners who possess the necessary knowledge for testing these. He acts as proxy for the Chinese public, in fact in many business firms he is the Chinese partner.

illegally. However, the director of an English bank in Tientsin told me, after making similar enquiries, that this was by far the largest bank in the place and one that annually handles millions. Now, I do not wish to accuse those European gentlemen who gave me such contradictory information - both pieces of information were after all based on reports of their compradores - but I simply want to show the difficulty involved in carrying on business with the interior. Even the Chinese of the coast know very little

It had become clear to me that on my new expedition into the highlands, I could not think of continuing my old route. It would have taken too much time to get to the old place on the Tschang tang. By the time I would have reached it the animals would have suffered so much from the cold as well as from the distance, that I would have had little prospects of an important further advance. But above all I did not have the means to equip a second equally large caravan. I had therefore decided to take a trip into the little /98/ known K'am. In K'am on the upper Yangtze Kiang, around the sources of the Mekong and up to the banks of the Salwen, there lies a Tibetan province which, as I mentioned earlier, belongs to Hsining or rather to the Kuku Nor territory because it was occupied by Hsining Chinese at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the wars of conquest of the Manchu. The people of Hsining call this province the Hung mao or de ti fang, the "home of the red-hats" (1), sometimes also the Yü fu (Yü schu in the

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1. All the people who do not belong to the Gelugba sect, refer to the Hsining Chinese as "red-hats," irrespective of whether they follow the Nima- (rNingma-)Saskya-, or Karma-rites. As far as a layman is concerned the difference between these sects consists chiefly in small externalisms of the ritual, in the invocation, the gestures of the hands, in the type of music, in the intonation of the instruments and in whistling and hand-clapping. For the monks the difference lies in the first place, in the diversity of tutelary gods.

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Peking dialect). It is the country of Nan tsien (or Nan tschen) dyalbo, a king who is practically independent. The territory is very large and little of it has been explored because it is extremely difficult of access. We therefore do not even know its exact boundaries. But it is today the most important center of the old Nima- (rNingma-) faith, that is, this very sect of Red-hats.

In order to penetrate the lands of the Nan tsien king, I felt that it was first of all necessary for me to secure the consent of the Hsining amban. But how was it possible for me, without a recommendation from my government, once again to come into the presence of the high and mighty lord? It took a great deal of trouble. This yamen had an astonishing number of almighty gate-keepers. On two different days I went to the amban yamen at 10 o'clock in the morning and left it when the gates were closed at night without being admitted by the

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122 crew of gate-keepers. I almost lost patience. But on the third day I was received. The disturbance I caused in the front court seems to have become too great. I had arrived with my bedding in order to be comfortable during the night. I had also ordered a number of traders to come to the yamen entrance court, so that I would not be passing the time entirely idly. I had reminded the private secretary of the American traveler who had come to Hsining the year before on his way to Turkestan and who was solemnly received by the amban shortly after his arrival, and was later even specially invited. I could also refer to Lieutenant Brooke's reception. Even the Hungarian scholar Stein who was traveling on an English mission had had interpreters sent him by the amban, although the man was only going to Sa tschou and had not even come into the amban's territory. All this at a word from the corresponding embassies.

When finally I sat next to the amban I got the nice old gentleman to the point, after an hour, where he had a new passport drawn up for me as well as a letter of safe conduct. He also guaranteed in writing that I should have an interpreter for my journey into the Nan tsien country. In return I promised him to waive any claims of future indemnity. The interpreter, a certain Tschang, who on the next day already presented himself at my inn, was, of course, much too young. He counted only 20 summers and spoke Tibetan poorly. But he had been to K'am. When I was on the point of refusing him because of his poor command of the language, I was given the choice of a very old, asthmatic man who was so weakened from opium that he /99/ could hardly sit on a horse and would hardly have arrived in K'am alive. So I contented myself with the younger one. The amban Tsching schu was entirely of the old school. He was a great poet, doted on classical quotations, but his idea about his country was merely that it was bad business. The autumn before he had been very unlucky in his interpreters and secretaries. The Gan ts'a sub-tribe of Pamba who had killed his interpreter Ts'ai, had paid a considerable sum of money in order to be permitted to reoccupy its old pastures on the lake. Several of the secretaries, however, had pocketed this money and had put off the Tibetans. The latter did not wait long. They knew how to make themselves felt. The embezzlement was uncovered, the guilty ones were dismissed and some were even imprisoned. In all important positions the amban now had new people who knew as little about Tibet as he did.

000 On January 20 my new caravan was ready and I departed without delay. Mr. Ridley accompanied me as far as the entrance to the